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ARABIC IN CERTIFIED TRASLATORS' WORK

ABSTRACT: The present paper concerns Arabic in certified translators' work. The paper contains a selection of examples translated from Arabic into Polish from a large domain of translation studies. I would like to underline that the present examples concern Polish language, with the English version not being a primary focus. This paper will deal with two important points (i) suitable words which express exact meanings and terms and (ii) the correctness of administrative style in some Arabic documents. The author will also examine the composition of Arabic texts and selection of information during the translation process.

KEY WORDS: certified translation, Arabic, Polish

The present paper concerns Arabic in certified translators' work. The paper contains a selection of examples translated from Arabic into Polish from a large domain of translation studies. I would like to underline that the present examples concern Polish language, with the English version not being a primary focus.

There are numerous translation terms which have a large impact on the translation process and the quality of translation. However, different methods of translation are related to the rule of clearness of the text and with conditions and preferences of the audience². In addition, the Arabic language imposes other exigencies and requirements such as traditional, religious, cultural, social, administrative aspects.

In my presentation I will refer to two important points. In the first, I will pay attention to suitable words which express exact meanings and terms. The second problem affects the correctness of administrative style in some

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² Different methods of translation process are refined in the book *Translation terminology* translated and adapted by Teresa Tomaszekiewicz. See: Jean Delisle. Hannelore Lee-Jahnke (et alii) 1999. Adaptation and translation: Teresa Tomaszekiewicz 2006.

Arabic documents. We will examine the composition of Arabic texts and selection of information during the translation process.

To begin, I will detail suitable Arabic vocabulary. It is difficult to express and determine the meanings of words from different domains such as new technology and computer science. We will examine many calques from English and French which help to solve this problem. Words like *burjer*, *sbaysī*, *fīza*, *tāksī*, *fidiū*, *telewizjūn*, *sīdi*, *kasīt*, *hard dīsk*, *ultrafiolet* are universally used in everyday Arabic. At the same time, corresponding words in Arabic are: *ta'shīra* (a visa), *sayyāra ujra* (a taxi), *sharīṭ* (a CD, a cassette), *qurṣ ṣalbi* (a hard disk) become less frequently used. Calques can prove an advanced poverty of Arabic language and a huge influence of English taking the place of local languages in the future³. We must add that the exaggeration of calques is treated as a methodological mistake during the translation process⁴. On the other side, that situation is a comprehensible effect of globalization and conscious choice of Arabic speakers.

Some models and schemas help to avoid the calques in Arabic. They support the building of new terms and meanings too. Many examples are related to technology, physics and chemistry. We find, for instance, an Arabic model *fa'āl* which refers to some machines and installations like *dabbāba* (a tank), *sayyāra* (a car) and *ghawwāṣa* (a submarine). This schema also refers to the names of professions like *khabbāz* (a baker), *rassām* (a drawer, a designer), *khayyāt* (a tailor). Another model, *mif'al*, refers to machines engaging in an activity such as *miṣ'ad* (a lift) or *mikbaḥ* (a brake)⁵. There is also a schema called the hybrid (ar. *naḥit*). It consists of words combinations which contain an Arabic and European subjects like the word *fikruluḡya* (an ideology). It is a connection of two separate words: the Arabic word *fikr* (an idea) and the European word *logia*. We can observe a similar situation in the example: *kahraḡarari* (thermoelectric) composed of two Arabic significations: *kahraba* (electricity) and *ḡarāra* (temperature)⁶.

³ The arabization of words and borrowings from different languages was a natural process in the history of Arabic. Famous philologists like Sibawayh (d. 796), Abū 'Ubayda (d. 825), Ibn Qutayba (d. 869) and Al-Jāhiz (d. 869) proved that many words had come from Persian, Hindi, Latin etc. Cultural, economic and political development in Islamic Empire increased research in a huge domaine of Arabic words and significations from different languages. Muḡammad 'Abd al-'Aziz 1985: 140-150.

⁴ Jean Delisle. Hannelore Lee-Jahnke (et alii) 1999: 29.

⁵ Jerzy Łacina 1989: 6-7. See also Janusz Danecki 1994: 143-146.

⁶ Ibidem: 18-19, 34.

It should be mentioned that a large group of suffixes retain particular meanings. Suffix *īk*, for instance, signifies acids like *ḥāmid kibritīk* (sulfuric acid) or *ḥāmid fusfurīk* (phosphoric acid). There are also many meanings that correspond to European prefixes: *dawī* (photo), *mutaʿaddad* (multi) or *fawki* (hyper)⁷.

However, all of those methods are not sufficient for the huge domain of Arabic meanings and words. In fact, one word cannot determine multiple meanings. Among the many examples, there is the word *ḥawd*. It means a bath, a washbasin, a sink etc. The essential meaning comes from a reservoir in a mosque for an ablution before the prier. *Ḥawd* has new meanings as a result of semantic displacement. Nevertheless, it does not contain every detail related to bathroom equipment. A similar situation can be found in the expression: *athathu al-bayti*, which means furniture but more generally refers to all equipment in a house. The distinction between these meanings is important in judicial cases like divorce and division of property. The two parties involved often mention each type of furniture such as a book-case known in Polish language as *meblościanka*. The word *khizāna* is an Arabic equivalent of that meaning but it also refers to other furniture in the house like a chest of drawers, a wardrobe, cupboards, etc. Also relevant is the word *miftāḥ* which means a key and a switch like in the phrase: *miftāḥu al-kahrabāi* (electricity switch). The precision of that term is important in electrical systems. There can be confusion about if the object being referred is a switch or a key placed in some installations.

Word meanings cannot always be developed from the Arabic context. It not only takes into consideration particular meanings, but also different situations, circumstances and a deeper sense of the text too. We may draw attention to the word *rizq* which signifies food as well as a gift. At the same time *rizq* has religious connotations related to the Grace of Allah and a gift coming from heaven. Words *maṭar* and *ghayth* mean rain but the first example holds a negative connotation effected by dangerous floods and natural disasters. Instead, *ghayth* defines positive connotations of the rain in the desert.

The question of the context is also obvious in translations of media language. The concept of *Jihād* is a good example of this. It loses its religious connotations and gains contemporary, useful translations. This is why *Jihād* often means The Holy War or even terrorism⁸.

⁷ Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz 1985: 108-114.

⁸ The notion *Jihād* needs deeper explanations of course. However, we must remark that Arabic word

The precision of words and Arabic context can be solved by the generalization of meanings. This is especially useful in difficult and less frequently used terminology from law and exact sciences. These generalizations are justified because of the clearness of communication between Arabic and Polish audiences. Moreover, additional meanings do not have to be taken into consideration.

The term *a complaint* brings some difficulties in translation. The Arabic words *shakwa* and *iddi'ā* correspond with this phrase but they also introduce negative connotations related to sorrow, pretensions, and complaints. In order to avoid discussions about these deeper meanings, we can adopt the word *ṭalab* (a request) which responds with a simple proposal or a request due to family cases or heritage. Arabic audiences should know that this meaning does not complain or accuse, but proposes a request or an argument to the court.

A similar situation occurs in the term *a judgment*. It can be translated as *ḥukm* or *muḥākama*. The first equivalent has an archaic sense and is rarely used. The second one concerns criminal cases and accusations. In this situation the word *qarār* (a decision) should be used to generalize the meaning and remain clear and legible for Arabic audiences.

The generalization of meanings is evident in the terms *adoption* and *preparation*. The word *tabann* refers to both of them, but it does not separate the questions of natural, biological parenthood and adoption of a child by new parents. *Tabann* embraces just the general problem of a child's adoption.

During the translation process, we must adopt different stylistic constructions and expressions composed of two or three words in order to detail particular Arabic notions. This is an effect of imagery and metaphor in the Arabic language. Expressions like *Bintu shafatin* (lips' daughter) and *Ibn awa* (shelter's son) are good examples of this⁹. The first phrase signifies *a word* and the second one *a jackal*. The sense of those expressions is based on impressions following the common marks between each word of the phrase.

Descriptive constructions help to precise and complete technical and audiovisual terminology. This is evident in the following examples.

jihād means an effort and self-sacrifice. The meaning is related to moral struggle in order to reach religious and spiritual purity. *Jihād* is also a self-defence against the danger for the faith. That defence is usually based on rational explanations of Quran and logical argumentations. Violence in that case is condemned and criticized. See more: Tahar Gāid 1982: 100-103.

⁹ Janusz Danecki 1994: 114.

The Arabic equivalent of the phrase: *remote control* is expressed by the description *waḥdatu at-taḥakkumi an bu'din* (a unit for remote control). The word *waḥda* (a unit) which not only indicates a general meaning of remote control, but also especially the mechanism.

The translation of the term *a notebook computer (laptop)* corresponds with the Arabic equivalent *ajhizatu kumbyūtarin al-maḥmūlatu* (a mechanism of a mobile computer). The word *ajhiza* (a mechanism) is essential in that phrase. It determines the kind of installation and its small size. A notebook computer can be compared with installations like a camera (ar. *jihāzu at-taṣwīri*) or a video-camera (ar. *jihāzu kamīra*).

We should also pay attention to some translations of commands in different audiovisual installations. The phrase *azrāru ikhtiyāri al-qanāti* (buttons for selecting the channels) is an Arabic version *channels button*. The word *ikhtiyār* (choice) describes the function and application of the mechanism. A similar situation is present in the example *azrāru l-baḥṭhi al-waṣīfati* (buttons for searching the function) which defines the function *search buttons*. The command is completed by the word *waṣīfa* which defines the function of searching. Particular words give clear information concerning the application of certain mechanism.

We should also mention the phrase *miqyāsu sur'ati ar-riyāḥi* (wind speed gauge) which is the equivalent to the term *an anemometr*. The word *sur'a* (speed) explains the activity of the mechanism. The anemometr not only measures the wind, but also the speed.

The phrase *a passenger vehicle* is often translated as *sayyāratu naqli ar-rukkābi* (a vehicle for passenger transport). The expression *sayyāratu ar-rukkābi* (passenger vehicle) seems more acceptable and efficient but it defines possession of a vehicle. The mentioned phrase with the word *naql* (transport) distinguishes the membership and allocation of the vehicle.

Sometimes the precision of meaning rests on the replacement of particular words. This is evident in a questionnaire concerning an application for a visa to Tunisia. The application contains the following expression *Bilād Tūnisiyya* (Tunisian Lands) or *Turāb Tūnisiyy* (Tunisian Soil). These kinds of names make a distinction of the Arabic word *Tūnis* which defines the capital and name of the state. The exact meaning of the expressions are important due to questions concerning the stay in country as a whole or only the capital. On the other side, there is an official name *Al-Jumhuriyya at-Tūnisiyya* (Republic of Tunisia), but it is usually used in certain situations and is treated as a separate name in some documents.

The second question of the present paper concerns the formal style in Arabic documents and requirements related to culture, tradition, religion and administration. I would like to take into consideration these stylistic forms.

Administrative style depends on certain terminology such as formal functions of Arabic institutions. The terms: *mudīr*, *muwaẓẓaf*, *amīn*, *mukhtār*, *ḏābit* are generally used. *Mudīr* designates a manager, a director, a president, a principal etc. *Muwaẓẓaf* refers to a clerk and a civil servant. However, *ḏābit* means an officer. *Amīn* means a secretary and *mukhtār* a foreman. It is difficult to translate and define the formal functions *murāqib* (a supervisor) and *nazẓār* (an inspector). This is why, in the target language, we must replace those terms by more popular and useful equivalents like president, manager, officer or principal.

Different, formal functions correspond with administrative zones in Arab countries. We distinguish words like *wilāya*, *muḥāfaẓa*, *dāira*, *baladiyya*, *muqāṭaʿa* and *iqḷīm*. They signify European terminology: *voivodeship*, *district*, *province* and *region*. The application of those notions depends on the location of the Arab countries. *Muḥāfaẓa*, for instance, occurs in the Middle East and *wilāya* in the West. Because of multiple sense of administrative units, French offices use the word *oulaya* to describe districts in Tunisia, Algeria or Morocco. There are also the terms *iqḷīm* and *muqāṭaʿa* which mean a district and a province. However, *muqataʿa* is used only as a nominal name for a district and it differs from the words *muḥāfaẓa* or *wilāya*. Besides, *iqḷīm* defines a large surface with undetermined borders like in the case of Kurdistan known in Arabic as: *Iqlīmu Kurdistaniyy* (The Region of Kurdistan).

Another group of words has a big influence on formal style in Arabic documentation. These words emphasize notions in texts and express the seriousness of content in documents. The following nouns are an example of such: *mustanadāt* and *qayd*. *Mustanadāt* represents certificates and guarantees presented in an office or joined to documentation. *Mustanadāt* is different from the terms *wathīqa* (a document) or *awraq* (writings, papers), which are well known in everyday Arabic language.

Nevertheless, the word *qayd* responds to Arabic words: *tasjīl* or *sijl*. They signify registration and record. *Qayd* instead refers to the registration number and essential information about a citizen. The fundamental meaning of that

term is related to strong relationships and connections. This means that *qayd* refers to connections between a particular person and his identity. If any certificates concern general registration, it appears in the words *tasjil* or *sijl*. The term *qayd* occurs when documentation refers to specified personal information.

We can also observe additional verbs in some documents. The expression *tamma ta'inahu* is an Arabic version of the phrase *to be nominated*. Using the verb *tamma* (to finish) formalizes the document. This also differs from simple, everyday statements such as *'ayyanahu raisan* (he nominated him for a prime minister).

A similar style dominates in the example *jaa an-naṣṣu wifqan li-muḥtawā shahādatin* (the text has arrived in accordance with the matter of the certificate). The verb *jaa* (to arrive) is essential to the sentence because it introduces an official style and emphasizes a solemnity of the document.

The analysis of the order of words in Arabic sentences as well as the selection and segmentation of information in the text are equally important in the translation process.

Many Arabic certificates contain the following phrases *yashhadu al-mudīru, binaan 'ala al-marsūmi raqmun...* (the principal declares, according to the ordinance number...). We can observe a long list of ordinances and regulations. There is an essential declaration of the principal. The target language requires that we select certain information and change the order of the text. We must separate all ordinances from the declaration. The decision should appear on the top of the text and other parts should be placed in a particular passage.

There is the same method of translation in some birth certificates. These certificates usually contain the sentence: *fī as-sā'ati as-sābi'ati khamṣa 'ashara daqīqatan, fī al-madinati Abu Sa'id, al-baladiyyati Abu Sa'id, ad-dairati Abu Sa'id, wulida Ḥasan, ibnu Aḥmadin wa Layla*. (at seven o'clock, fifteen minutes, in the city of Abu Sa'id, in the district of Abu Sa'id, the region of Abu Sa'id was born Hasan, the son of Ahmad and Layla). A birth certificate is a sort of detailed description of the birth process. It does not contain a list with all essential information about the child and the parents.

Arabic documents have a stylistic order. Some of them contain passages with the phrase *wa ba'du* (then, next) such as in the following example *aṭyabu taḥiyyatin wa ba'du* (best wishes and then [next]). *Wa ba'du* does not correspond to the other parts of the sentence. That is why it is often used in translations. However *wa ba'du* underlines the formal sense and separates certain passages in the document.

The same description is present in a marriage certificate. It demonstrates the protocol of the ceremony and includes every person taking part in the marriage as well as instructions and formal regulations.

Some documents contain sentences and phrases related to religious and moral aspects. The passage *Bi-smi Allahi wa rahmāni wa rahīmi* (in the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful) occurs in a majority of certificates. That phrase authenticates and executes the document. It also proves the strong relations between the state and Islam. A translation into the target language usually obliges us to avoid religious references in order to conserve administrative style.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore that question in certificates declaring faith and acceptance of Islamic law (ar. *dīn wa madhhab*). It is important in many judicial and administrative cases such as marriage, divorce, adoption or citizenship.

Influence of religion is obvious in the documentation of the condition before marriage. It contains the following sentence: *lā yūjadu māni'un shir'iyyun aw qanūniyyun bi an yatazawwaja* (there are not any juridical and Islamic juridical prohibitions for marriage). Religious references can be necessary in family cases which do not occur in civil law. That is why religious aspects should be translated.

We can add the example of a marriage certificate. It contains a long description of a dowry which includes the amount of money for each side of the marriage as well as bars of gold for a bride in the case of divorce. Of course, this unique description is not present in Polish translations because of formal regulations. However, we can present a summary of information about the marriage ceremony.

The relations of bystanders are equally important in many documents. Here is an example from the condition certificate *lahu al-ḥaqqu al-qanūniyyu bi-an yatazawwaja bi-shahādati ash-shāhidayni* (He has the right to be married based on the declaration of two bystanders). The phrase *shahādatu ash-shāhidayni* (the declaration of two bystanders) is the most interesting in this certificate. It not only includes the signatures of bystanders during the marriage ceremony and formal rules, but also ocular relations of the participants. A verbal declaration appears more important than any document or certificate¹⁰.

¹⁰ The experience from my childhood passed in Algeria proves that bystanders' testimony is very important. A friend of our family sold a car. New owners caused a car accident and injured one person on the same day. Unfortunately the name of our friend was appearing in documentation of the car.

The importance of verbal and visual testimony is also evident in birth certificates. The following information is present on the certificate *al-abu, al-ummu, al-qābilatu aw ghayruhum mimman shahida al-wilādata* (a father, a mother, a nurse or anyone else who has seen the birth). Polish documentation is concentrated on the child's parents. Arabic certificates place an emphasis on persons who can testify to the birth.

Social and moral tendencies are illustrated in Arabic documents too. The Arabic Health Book (ar. *daftar 'ailiyy*) from the 1980's is a good example of this. There are approximately twelve pages referencing children. Details about subsequent children are placed in each page. This is proof of the high birth rate in Arabic countries. It is worth noting that there is only one page for the father. It contains essential information about his name, profession as well as the date and place of birth. The health book shows the important function of the father in a family. Due to the lower birth rate it is difficult to adopt this kind of certificate in Polish (European) conditions. This is why a summary of the first page of the document should be given. In the case of many children, we must translate all pages and refer to every passage of the text.

Concluding, I would like to remark that my comments present the specificity of the Arabic language on the level with administration, societal, moral, and religious regulations. I also analyzed different methods of translation and questions of formal style in Arabic documentation. Nevertheless, the clearness of the text is most important during the translation process.

This paper points to the fact that efficient and detailed words express multiple meanings in Arabic. I referred to descriptive phrases and stylistic constructions which exemplify the difficult significations as well as the formal style in documents.

While selection of information and the different order of Arabic sentences are very important, this paper proves that segmentation is based on essential details for the target language.

It could cause some problems with the police and indicate the perpetrator of the accident. Finally, the problem was solved by people who saw the incident and declared immediately that the buyer had given some amount of money so he became a new owner of the car and he was responsible for the accident.

I presented some social, moral, and religious aspects which are not present in many Polish translations. However these aspects show the working of Arabic administration and offices. Many of these questions are useful in making formal decisions and can improve communication between European and Arabic institutions.

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Język arabski w pracy tłumacza przysięgłego

Niniejszy referat dotyczy osobistych refleksji związanych z pracą tłumacza przysięgłego języka arabskiego.

Istotną rolę odgrywa odpowiedni dobór słownictwa, które obejmowałoby swoim zakresem znaczeniowym poszczególne pojęcia w danym języku. Należy także wspomnieć o odzwierciedlaniu właściwej terminologii w języku arabskim, która nie zawsze odpowiada językowi polskiemu. Taka sytuacja zmusza niekiedy do stosowania ekwiwalentów znaczeniowych, generalizujących pojęć bądź rozbudowanych, opisowych konstrukcji stylistycznych.

Specyfika języka arabskiego wymaga również uwzględniania różnorodnych czynników w pracy translatorskiej niezależnie od charakteru i tematyki tekstu. Czynniki te dotyczą często religii, tradycji, kultury i obyczajów czy wreszcie kwestii społeczno-politycznych i administracyjnych.

Równie ważną rolę odgrywa szyk zdania w arabskim tekście, w którym określone informacje zostają wyeksponowane na początku i dominują liczne wtrącenia i dopowiedzenia, co zmusza do pomijania i skracania niektórych kwestii.

Zaprezentowane rozważania mogą okazać się użyteczne przy wydawaniu różnych decyzji administracyjnych i sądowych, a także mogą przyczynić się do sprawnej komunikacji między urzędami europejskimi i arabskimi.